

The HAVNT-
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Thomas Hood

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Illustrations by
Herbert Walton.
Introduction by
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Cambridge.
1903.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

A Romance

THE HAUNTED HOUSE
BY THOMAS HOOD ILLUSTRATED
BY HERBERT RAILTON WITH AN
INTRODUCTION BY AUSTIN
DOBSON



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INTRODUCTION

The Haunted House is pathetically connected with the close of its author's life. It belongs to the period comprised in the final pages of those simple and unaffected Memorials by his son and daughter, which—until, from the pen of the Master of the Temple or some one equally capable, we are furnished with an ampler and a more critical biography—must remain the chief record of Thomas Hood. It was in the May of 1845 that he died; and *The Haunted House* was probably composed in the last months

of 1843, when he was already a doomed man, though still struggling gallantly, in spite of everything, to carry on his literary pursuits. Already, for several years past, his condition had been more or less critical. He suffered from heart disease, and periodic hæmorrhage of the lungs, combined with minor ailments; all of which, according to his faithful friend and physician, Dr. William Elliot, had been aggravated by the necessity that he should, in all circumstances and "at all times continue his literary labours, being under engagements to complete certain works within a stated period." In the train of insomnia had come its attendant troubles, depression and exhaustion, and these

again had increased his malady, "bringing on renewed attacks, and reducing him to such a state that he had been rendered utterly incapable of mental effort." These quotations are from a letter of 1840, but they represent with even more accuracy his condition in 1843. Yet his endurance, his courage, his buoyancy, and his cheerful spirit kept him active almost to the end. Several times during the progress of his last enterprise, his friends, of whom happily he seems to have had no lack, were obliged to make fresh excuses for the absence of his familiar pen. Now and then a little drawing, executed with difficulty in his sick bed, did duty for the defaulting pages of prose or verse; and many of

his later papers were dictated to his wife—that kind and loving nurse who for so brief a space survived her husband—in the intervals of terrible paroxysms of pain. The moment he could return to work he did so, pouring out his “whims and oddities,” scrawling off admirable letters to childish favourites, or drawing up eloquent appeals to those in power on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. And strangely enough, to this period of his life belong not only *The Haunted House*, but two more of his most successful and enduring poetical efforts, *The Song of the Shirt* and *The Bridge of Sighs*.

The Song of the Shirt came out anonymously in the Christmas Number

of *Punch* for 1843, and its instantaneuous and extraordinary popularity is matter of history. But *The Haunted House* and *The Bridge of Sighs* both appeared in that ill-starred and short-lived serial *Hood's Magazine and Comic Miscellany*. The three volumes of this are now so rarely to be found, and it is, moreover, so intimately connected with its Editor's final struggle with that "long disease," his life, that before proceeding to the main duty of this "Introduction," it may be worth while to give some account of it. A periodical which, in addition to the beautiful *Stanzas*—"Farewell, Life! My senses swim," includes, not only two of Hood's best pieces, but half a dozen of

Robert Browning's *Dramatic Lyrics* and *Romances*, two or three poems by Keats, a poem and a conversation by Walter Savage Landor, and contributions by Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), "Barry Cornwall" (B. W. Procter), the Hon. Mrs. Norton, G. H. Lewes, and G. P. R. James,—to say nothing of a humorous epistle from Charles Dickens,—scarcely deserves to fall into complete oblivion. Its prospectus, which was issued at the end of 1843, was in Hood's best manner, bristling of course with wit and puns, and betraying not the least indication of the writer's miserable state of health. There was to be a total abstinence from the stimulating topics and fermented ques-

tions of Politics and Polemics, it said, but "for the Sedate there would be papers of becoming gravity ; and the lover of Poetry would be supplied with numbers in each Number." "It would aim at being merry and wise, instead of merry and otherwise." "A critical eye was to be kept on current Literature,—a regretful one on the Drama, and a kind one on the Fine Arts, from whose Artesian well there would be an occasional *drawing*."

More than half of the first number, which was published in January with, for those days, considerable success, (1,500 copies being sold), was contributed by Hood himself. The frontispiece was an exceedingly good steel engraving by J. Cousen, after Thomas Creswick,

R.A., of *The Haunted House*; and it is quite possible that the original picture, which, we are told, was never in Hood's possession, supplied the initial suggestion for the poem it was employed to decorate. There were other verses by the Editor in the first part, which also included a metrical description, by an anonymous hand, of Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*,—a description scarcely to be described as an improvement on Hoadly's contemporary verses. The start which the magazine obtained was, however, speedily obstructed by the usual financial difficulties. The proprietor turned out to be a man of straw, who had been tempted into the speculation by the Editor's name, but was without suf-

ficient capital to float the enterprise. After changing printers twice, Hood managed to get out the second number, which opened with another of his more serious poems, *The Lady's Dream*, —the title, by the way, of one of Stothard's water-colour designs in the William Smith Bequest at South Kensington. Hood's *Lady's Dream*, however, — notable for the couplet,

“ Evil is wrought by want of Thought
As well as want of Heart,”—

was illustrated by himself, with some obvious assistance from its engraver, Samuel Williams, and it had also an exceedingly picturesque tail-piece of a “ Church Porch,” the “ scene of *Gray's Elegy*,” which, from the initials “ T.C.,”

was apparently by Creswick. Among Hood's colleagues in this part were Charles Mackay and Mrs. S. C. Hall, the latter of whom had offered to assist out of "veneration to the author of the *Song of the Shirt*." In No. III. again, the initial poem, *The Key: a Moorish Romance*, was editorial; but the most ambitious contribution was a blank verse treatment by Mackay of that theme of the death of Pan which, in this same year, Mrs. Browning also handled so supremely.

Other "numbers in the Numbers" that succeeded were by Samuel Lover and the Hon. Mrs. Norton. In Part V., after a *Threatening Letter to Thomas Hood* from Dickens, came *The Bridge of*

Sighs and the beginning of the Editor's unfinished novel, *Our Family*. In the next part Browning arrived to the rescue with *The Laboratory* and *Claret* and *Tokay*, which two latter pieces (supplemented by *Beer*) figure in his works under the title of *Nationality in Drinks*. These contributions he afterwards followed up by *Garden Fancies*, *The Boy and the Angel*, *The Tomb at St. Praxed's*, and *The Flight of the Duchess*. Apparently this assistance was procured for the magazine by Milnes, to whose good offices is no doubt also due the song of *Old Meg*, which Keats was stated to have written during his tour in Scotland in 1818, and which made its first appearance in No. VI., heralding

one or two other minor pieces from the same pen. But before the first volume was finished, work and worry had again brought Hood to the brink of the grave. "During several days," says an announcement at the end of the number for June, "fears were entertained for his life." But he had rallied, and was recovering, though slowly,—in earnest of which he sent forth from his sick chamber two little sketches bearing unmistakable traces of the disadvantages under which they had been produced. One, *Hood's Mag*, was a magpie in a hawk's hood; the other, an "arrangement" of blisters, leeches, and physic bottles, symbolised and expressed *The Editor's Apologies*.

It is needless to describe in detail the contents of the two remaining volumes. Apart from Browning's poems, the most important of the pieces that followed were Landor's *Prayer of the Bees for Alciphron*, and the dialogue (in prose) between Dante and Beatrice, while in the number for November, 1844, figured a *Death of Clytemnestra* by Bulwer Lytton, also but recently recovered from illness. *Our Family* dragged on to its twenty-third chapter; but with the exception of the *Lay of the Labourer* and the stanzas beginning "Farewell, Life!" already referred to, nothing else of importance came from the Editor himself. His last prose contribution was a *Note from my Note Book*, in which he called

attention to the curious fact that Collins's *Ode to Evening* is but one unbroken sentence ; his last metrical effort, a not very remarkable epigram on Lord Brougham. This latter appeared in the March number of Vol. II., the frontispiece to which was the engraving by F. A. Heath (familiar in the old editions of Hood's poems) of his bust by Edward Davis. The same March number announced that he was "more seriously ill than even *he* had ever been before." In April the hopeless character of his malady was definitely announced. He lingered, however, for a month longer, dying, as he said, "inch by inch," but tranquil, resigned, and affectionate as of old. The end came at last on the 3rd of May, 1845.

It has already been hinted that *The Haunted House* may have been first prompted by Creswick's picture, for which the artist's name was no doubt the same. Indeed, the motto from Wordsworth prefixed to the poem is just such an one as might be expected in an Exhibition Catalogue. But even if this conjecture be well founded, the result is only to increase one's sense of the extraordinary fertility of fancy which has accumulated around a suggestive title such a succession of images of solitude and decay,—such a brooding horror of ancestral crime and desolation. It is true that to-day the manner of the work is a little in the melodramatic taste of the forties and

fifties, but it is not the less ghostly on that account. And in this connection, it may be observed that an acute and accomplished critic of poetry, the poet Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman, has been careful to notice a certain similarity between Hood's method in verse and some of Dickens's cognate pictures in prose. Mr. Stedman instances, for example, the touch of kinship between the old Hall in *The Haunted House* and "the shadowy grand-staircase in the Dedlock mansion" or "Mr. Tulkinghorn's chamber [in Lincoln's Inn Fields],—where the Roman points through loneliness and gloom to the dead body on the floor." Dickens had no need to borrow from any one ; but, as we have seen, he had

himself contributed to *Hood's Magazine*, and it may well be that something of its opening verses had lingered in his memory, though there are ten years between them and the publication of *Bleak House* in 1853. But in recalling Mr. Stedman's attractive pages, we must not forget that the most steadfast admirer of this poem—upon which the sympathetic pencil of Mr. HERBERT RAILTON has here lavished its wealth of ingenious interpretation—was also an American poet and critic. It is to *The Haunted House* that Edgar Allan Poe devotes the entire final paragraph of his review of Hood. In all probability no more keenly perceptive analyst of this particular effort could be found than

the author of *The Raven*, and for this reason we shall take leave to close this preface by quoting his "appreciation" with a minimum of excision. After saying that he prefers *The Haunted House* to any composition of its author, he goes on: "It is a masterpiece of its kind—and that kind belongs to a very lofty—if not to the very loftiest order of poetical literature. . . . Not the least merit of the work is its rigorous simplicity. . . . The thesis is one of the truest in all poetry. *As* a mere thesis it is really difficult to conceive anything better. The strength of the poet is put forth in the invention of traits in keeping with the ideas of crime, abandonment, and ghostly visitation. Every legitimate art is brought in

to aid in conveying the intended effects ; and (what is quite remarkable in the case of Hood) nothing discordant is at any point introduced. He has here very little of what we have designated as the fantastic—little which is not strictly harmonious. The metre and rhythm are not only in themselves admirably adapted to the whole design, but, with a true artistic feeling, the poet has preserved a thorough monotone throughout, and renders its effect more impressive by the repetition (gradually increasing in frequency towards the *finale*) of one of the most pregnant and effective of the stanzas :

‘ O’er all there hung a shadow and a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !’

Had Hood only written *The Haunted House*, it would have sufficed to render him immortal."

AUSTIN DOBSON.

EALING, *August*, 1895.

The Haunted House

The Haunted House

A Romance

Part I

*Some dreams we have are nothing else but dreams,
Unnatural, and full of contradictions ;
Yet others of our most romantic schemes
Are something more than fictions.*

*It might be only on enchanted ground ;
It might be merely by a thought's expansion ;
But, in the spirit or the flesh, I found
An old deserted Mansion.*

The Haunted House

*A residence for woman, child, and man,
A dwelling place,—and yet no habitation ;
A House,—but under some prodigious ban
Of Excommunication.*

*Unhinged the iron gates half open hung,
Farr'd by the gusty gales of many winters,
That from its crumbled pedestal had flung
One marble globe in splinters.*

*No dog was at the threshold, great or small ;
No pigeon on the roof—no household creature—
No cat demurely dozing on the wall—
Not one domestic feature.*

The Haunted House

*No human figure stirr'd, to go or come,
No face looked forth from shut or open casement ;
No chimney smoked—there was no sign of Home
From parapet to basement.*

*With shatter'd panes the grassy court was starr'd :
The time-worn coping-stone had tumbled after !
And thro' the ragged roof the sky shone, barr'd
With naked beam and rafter.*

*O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear ;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !*

The Haunted House

*The flow'r grew wild and rankly as the weed,
Roses with thistles struggled for espial,
And vagrant plants of parasitic breed,
Had overgrown the Dial.*

*But gay or gloomy, steaafast or infirm,
No heart was there to heed the hour's duration ;
All times and tides were lost in one long term
Of stagnant desolation.*

*The wren had built within the Porch, she found
Its quiet loneliness so sure and thorough ;
And on the lawn,—within its turfy mound,—
The rabbit made his burrow.*

The Haunted House

*The rabbit wild and grey, that flitted thro'
The shrubby clumps, and frisk'd, and sat, and
vanish'd
But leisurely and bold, as if he knew
His enemy was banish'd.*

*The wary crow,—the pheasant from the woods—
Lull'd by the still and everlasting sameness,
Close to the mansion, like domestic broods,
Fed with a “shocking tameness.”*

*The coot was swimming in the reedy pond,
Beside the water-hen, so soon affrighted ;
And in the weedy moat the heron, fond
Of solitude, alighted.*

The Haunted House

*The moping heron, motionless and stiff,
That on a stone, as silently and stilly,
Stood, an apparent sentinel, as if
To guard the water-lily.*

*No sound was heard except, from far away,
The ringing of the witwall's shrilly laughter,
Or, now and then, the chatter of the jay,
That Echo murmur'd after.*

*But Echo never mock'd the human tongue ;
Some weighty crime that Heaven could not pardon,
A secret curse on that old Building hung
And its deserted Garden.*

The Haunted House

*The beds were all untouch'd by hand or tool ;
No footstep mark'd the damp and mossy gravel,
Each walk as green as is the mantled pool,
For want of Human travel.*

*The vine unpruned, and the neglected peach,
Droop'd from the wall with which they used to
grapple ;
And on the kanker'd tree, in easy reach,
Rotted the golden apple.*

*But awfully the truant shunn'd the ground,
The vagrant kept aloof, and daring poacher,
In spite of gaps that thro' the fences round
Invited the encroacher.*

The Haunted House

*For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !*

*The pear and quince lay squander'd on the grass ;
The mould was purple with unheeded showers
Of bloomy plums—a Wilderness it was
Of fruits, and weeds, and flowers !*

*The marigold amidst the nettles blew,
The gourd embraced the rose-bush in its ramble ;
The thistle and the stock together grew,
The hollyhock and bramble.*

The Haunted House

*The bear-bine with the lilac interlaced,
The sturdy burdock choked its slender neighbour,
The spicy pink. All tokens were effaced
Of human care and labour.*

*The very yew Formality had train'd
To such a rigid pyramidal stature,
For want of trimming had almost regain'd
The raggedness of nature.*

*The Fountain was a-dry—neglect and time
Had marr'd the work of artisan and mason,
And efts and croaking frogs, begot of slime,
Sprawl'd in the ruin'd bason.*

The Haunted House

*The Statue, fallen from its marble base,
Amidst the refuse leaves, and herbage rotten,
Lay like the Idol of some bygone race,
Its name and rites forgotten.*

*On ev'ry side the aspect was the same,
All ruin'd, desolate, forlorn and savage :
No hand or foot within the precinct came
To rectify or ravage.*

*For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !*

The Haunted House

Part II

*O very gloomy is the House of Woe,
Where tears are falling while the bell is knelling,
With all the dark solemnities which show
That Death is in the dwelling.*

*O very, very dreary is the room
Where Love, domestic Love, no longer nestles,
But, smitten by the common stroke of doom,
The Corpse lies on the trestles!*

*But House of Woe, and hearse, and sable pall,
The narrow home of the departed mortal,
Ne'er look'd so gloomy as that Ghostly Hall,
With its deserted portal!*

The Haunted House

*The centipede along the threshold crept,
The cobweb hung across in mazy tangle,
And in its winding sheet the maggot slept,
At every nook and angle.*

*The keyhole lodged the earwig and her brood,
The emmets of the steps had old possession,
And march'd in search of their diurnal food
In undisturb'd procession.*

*As undisturb'd as the prehensile cell
Of moth or maggot, or the spider's tissue,
For never foot upon that threshold fell,
To enter or to issue.*

The Haunted House

*O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !*

*Howbeit, the door I push'd—or so I dream'd—
Which slowly, slowly gaped,—the hinges creaking
With such a rusty eloquence, it seem'd
That Time himself was speaking.*

*But Time was dumb within the Mansion old,
Or left his tale to the heraldic banners,
That hung from the corroded walls, and told
Of former men and manners :—*

The Haunted House

*Those tatter'd flags, that with the open'd door,
Seem'd the old wave of battle to remember,
While fallen fragments danced upon the floor,
Like dead leaves in December.*

*The startled bats flew out,—bird after bird,
The screech-owl overhead began to flutter,
And seem'd to mock the cry that she had heard
Some dying victim utter !*

*A shriek that echo'd from the joisted roof,
And up the stair, and further still and further,
Till in some ringing chamber far aloof
It ceased its tale of murther !*

The Haunted House

*Meanwhile the rusty armour rattled round,
The banner shudder'd, and the ragged streamer ;
All things the horrid tenor of the sound
Acknowledged with a tremor.*

*The antlers, where the helmet hung, and belt,
Stirr'd as the tempest stirs the forest branches,
Or as the stag had trembled when he felt
The bloodhound at his haunches.*

*The window jingled in its crumbled frame,
And thro' its many gaps of destitution
Dolorous moans and hollow sighings came,
Like those of dissolution.*

The Haunted House

*The woodlouse dropp'd, and roll'd into a ball,
Touch'd by some impulse occult or mechanic ;
And nameless beetles ran along the wall
In universal panic.*

*The subtle spider, that from overhead
Hung like a spy on human guilt and error,
Suddenly turn'd and up its slender thread
Ran with a nimble terror.*

*The very stains and fractures on the wall
Assuming features solemn and terrific,
Hinted some Tragedy of that old Hall,
Lock'd up in hieroglyphic.*

The Haunted House

*Some tale that might, perchance, have solved the
doubt,*

*Wherefore amongst those flags so dull and livid,
The banner of the Bloody Hand shone out
So ominously vivid.*

*Some key to that inscrutable appeal,
Which made the very frame of Nature quiver;
And every thrilling nerve and fibre feel
So ague-like a shiver.*

*For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted;
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!*

The Haunted House

*If but a rat had linger'd in the house,
To lure the thought into a social channel!
But not a rat remain'd, or tiny mouse,
To squeak behind the panel.*

*Huge drops roll'd down the walls, as if they wept;
And where the cricket used to chirp so shrilly,
The toad was squatting, and the lizard crept
On that damp hearth and chilly.*

*For years no cheerful blaze had sparkled there,
Or glanced on coat of buff or knightly metal;
The slug was crawling on the vacant chair,—
The snail upon the settle.*

The Haunted House

*The floor was redolent of mould and must,
The fungus in the rotten seams had quicken'd ;
While on the oaken table coats of dust
Perennially had thicken'd.*

*No mark of leathern jack or metal can,
No cup—no horn—no hospitable token,—
All social ties between that board and Man
Had long ago been broken.*

*There was so foul a rumour in the air,
The shadow of a presence so atrocious :
No human creature could have feasted there,
Even the most ferocious.*

*For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !*

The Haunted House

Part III

*'Tis hard for human actions to account,
Whether from reason or from impulse only—
But some internal prompting bade me mount
The gloomy stairs and lonely.*

*Those gloomy stairs, so dark, and damp, and cold,
With odours as from bones and relics carnal,
Deprived of right, and consecrated mould,
The chapel vault or charnel.*

The Haunted House

*Those dreary stairs, where with the sounding steps
Of ev'ry step so many echoes blended,
The mind, with dark misgivings, feared to guess
How many feet ascended.*

*The tempest with its spoils had drifted in,
Till each unwholesome stone was darkly spotted,
As thickly as the leopard's dappled skin,
With leaves that rankly rotted.*

*The air was thick—and in the upper gloom
The bat—or something in its shape—was winging ;
And on the wall, as chilly as a tomb,
The Death's-Head moth was clinging.*

The Haunted House

*That mystic moth, which, with a sense profound
Of all unholy presence, augurs truly ;
And with a grim significance flits round
The taper burning bluely.*

*Such omens in the place there seem'd to be,
At ev'ry crooked turn, or on the landing,
The straining eyeball was prepared to see
Some Apparition standing.*

*For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !*

The Haunted House

*Yet no portentous Shape the sight amazed ;
Each object plain, and tangible, and valid ;
But from their tarnish'd frames dark Figures gazed,
And Faces spectre-pallid.*

*Not merely with the mimic life that lies
Within the compass of Art's simulation ;
Their souls were looking thro' their painted eyes
With awful speculation.*

*On ev'ry lip a speechless horror dwelt ;
On ev'ry brow the burthen of affliction ;
The old Ancestral Spirits knew and felt
The House's malediction.*

The Haunted House

*Such earnest woe their features overcast,
They might have stirr'd, or sigh'd, or wept, or spoken ;
But, save the hollow moaning of the blast,
The stillness was unbroken.*

*No other sound or stir of life was there,
Except my steps in solitary clamber,
From flight to flight, from humid stair to stair,
From chamber into chamber.*

*Deserted rooms of luxury and state,
That old magnificence had richly furnish'd
With pictures, cabinets of ancient date,
And carvings gilt and burnish'd.*

The Haunted House

*Rich hangings, storied by the needle's art
With Scripture history, or classic fable ;
But all had faded, save one ragged part,
Where Cain was slaying Abel.*

*The ilent waste of mildew and the moth
Had marr'd the tissue with a partial ravage ;
But undecaying frown'd upon the cloth
Each feature stern and savage.*

*The sky was pale ; the cloud a thing of doubt ;
Some hues were fresh, and some decay'd and duller :
But still the Bloody Hand shone strangely out
With vehemence of colour !*

The Haunted House

*The Bloody Hand that with a lurid stain
Shone on the dusty floor, a dismal token,
Projected from the casement's painted pane,
Where all beside was broken.*

*The Bloody Hand significant of crime,
That glaring on the old heraldic banner,
Had kept its crimson unimpaired by time,
In such a wondrous manner.*

*O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!*

The Haunted House

*The Death Watch tick'd behind the panell'd oak,
Inexplicable tremors shook the arras,
And echoes strange and mystical awoke,
The fancy to embarrass.*

*Prophetic hints that fill'd the soul with dread,
But thro' one gloomy entrance pointing mostly,
The while some secret inspiration said,
That Chamber is the Ghostly!*

*Across the door no gossamer festoon
Swung pendulous—no web—no dusty fringes,
No silky chrysalis or white cocoon
About its nooks and hinges.*

The Haunted House

*The spider shunn'd the interdicted room,
The moth, the beetle, and the fly were-banish'd,
And where the sunbeam fell athwart the gloom
The very midge had vanish'd.*

*One lonely ray that glanced upon a Bed,
As if with awful aim direct and certain,
To show the Bloody Hand in burning red
Embroidered on the curtain.*

*And yet no gory stain was on the quilt—
The pillow in its place had slowly rotted;
The floor alone retain'd the trace of guilt,
Those boards obscurely spotted.*

The Haunted House

*Obscurely spotted to the door, and thence
With mazy doubles to the grated casement—
Oh what a tale they told of fear intense,
Of horror and amazement!*

*What human creature in the dead of night
Had coursed like hunted hare that cruel distance?
Had sought the door, the window in his flight,
Striving for dear existence?*

*What shrieking Spirit in that bloody room
Its mortal frame had violently quitted?—
Acrofs the sunbeam, with a sudden gloom,
A ghostly Shadow flitted.*

The Haunted House

*Acrofs the sunbeam, and along the wall,
But painted on the air so very dimly,
It hardly veil'd the tapestry at all,
Or portrait frowning grimly.*

*O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !*

The HAUNTED HOUSE
A Romance by THOMAS HOOD

the Illustrations by
Herbert Railton.
the Introduction by
Austin Dobson.



PART. I.



THE HAUNTED HOVE

A Romance

PART I.

SOME dreams we have are nothing else but dreams,

Unnatural, and full of contradictions,

Yet others of our most romantic schemes

Are something more than fictions.

Il might be only on enchanted Ground;
It might be merely by a thought's expansion,
But, in the spirit or the flesh, I found
An old deserted Mansion.

A residence for woman, child, and man,
A dwelling-place, — and yet no habitation;
A House, — but under some prodigious ban
Of communication.



Vnshinged the iron gates half open hving,
Tarr'd by the gusty gales of many winters,
What from its crumbled pedestal had slung
One marble globe in splinters.

No dog was at the threshold, great or small;

No pigeon on the roof — no household creature —

No cat demurely dozing on the wall —

Not one domestic feature



Admired the iron
Gates half open here

No human figure stir'd to go or come,

No face look'd forth from shut or open casement,

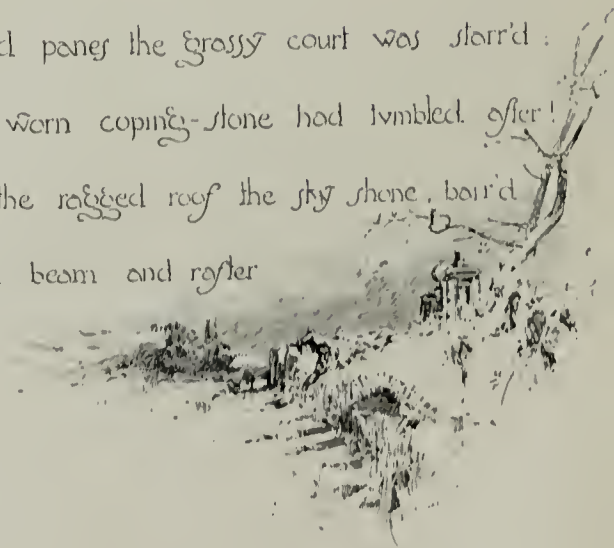
No chimney smoked — there was no sign of Home
From parapet to basement.

With shatter'd panes the glassy court was stor'd:

The time-worn coping-stone had tumbled over!

And thro' the ragged roof the sky shone, barr'd

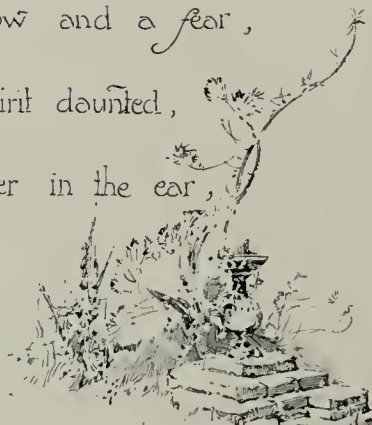
With naked beam and rafter





No chimneys smoked —
there was no sign of 'Home'.

O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted.



The flower grew wild and rankly as the weed,
Roses with thistles struggled for espial,
And vagrant plants of parasitic breed,
Had overgrown the Dial.



For over all there
hving a cloud of
fear

Bvt gay or gloomy, steadfast or infirm,
No heart was there to heed the hour's deviation;
All times and tides were lost in one long term
Of stagnant desolation.



The wren had built within the Berch, she found
Its quiet loneliness so sure and thorough,
And on the lawn,—within its turfy mound,—
The rabbit made his burrow.

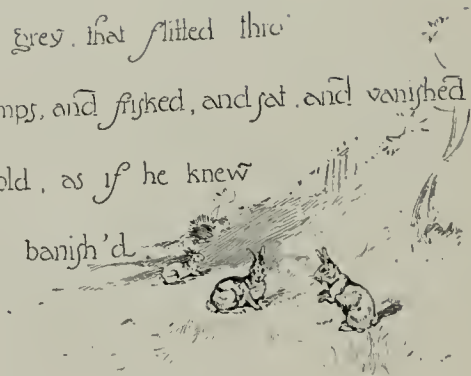


The rabbit wild and grey, that flitted thro'

The shrubby clumps, and frisked, and sat, and vanished

But leisurely and bold, as if he knew

His enemy was banish'd.



The wary crow, - the pheasant from the woods -

Lull'd by the still and everlasting sameness,

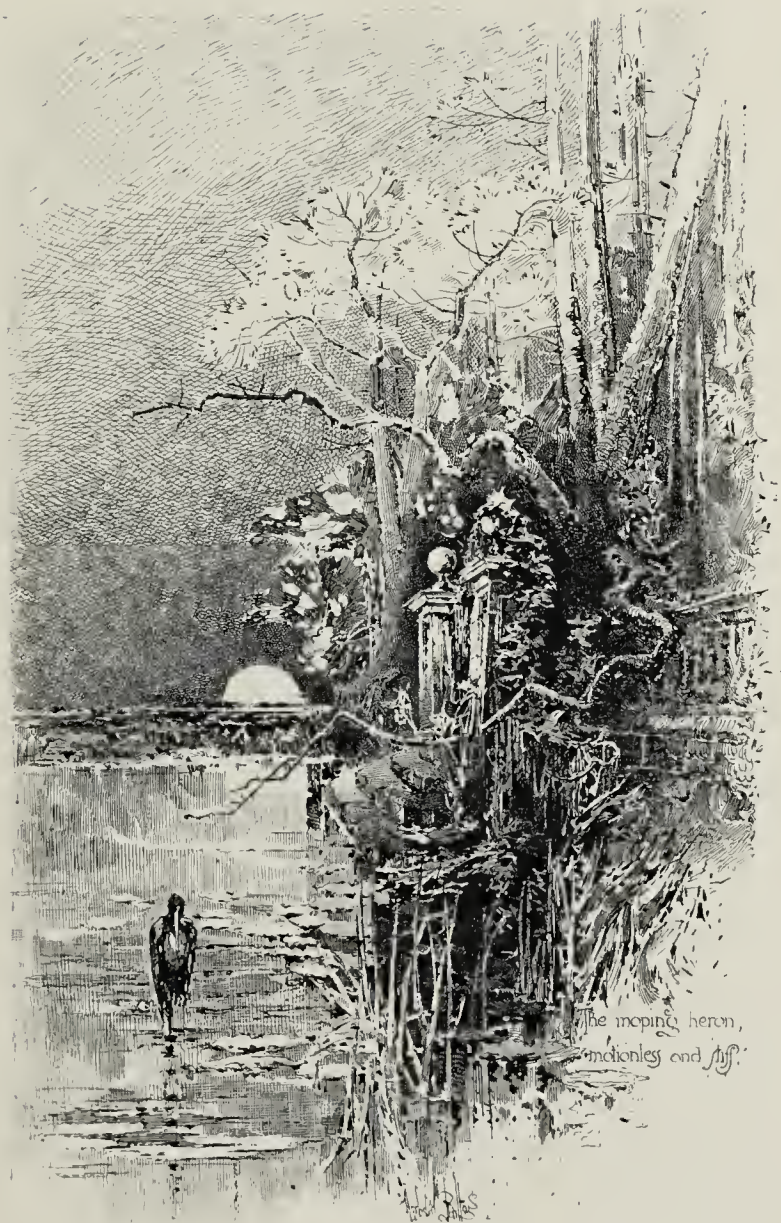
Close to the mansion, like domestic broods,

Feed with a "shocking tameness."

The coot was swimming in the reedy pond,
Beside the water-hen, so soon affrighted ;
And in the weedy moat the heron, fond
Of solitude, alighted .

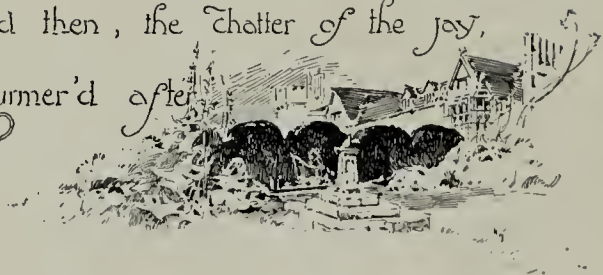
The moping heron, motionless and stiff,
That on a stone, as silently and stillly,
Stood, an apparent sentinel, as if
To guard the water-lily.





The mooping heron,
motionless and stiff.

No sound was heard except, from far away,
The ringing of the wittwall's shrilly laughter.
Or, now and then, the Chatter of the jay,
That Echo murmur'd after.





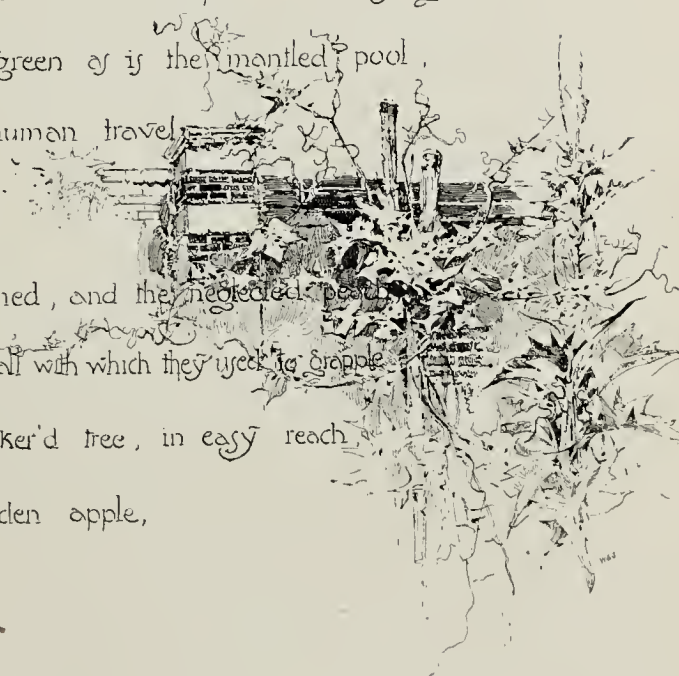
A secret curse on that old Building hung
And its deserted Garden."

Bvt Echo never mock'd the human tongue;
Some weighty crime, that Heaven could not pardon,
A secret curse on that Old Building hung
And its deserted Garden.

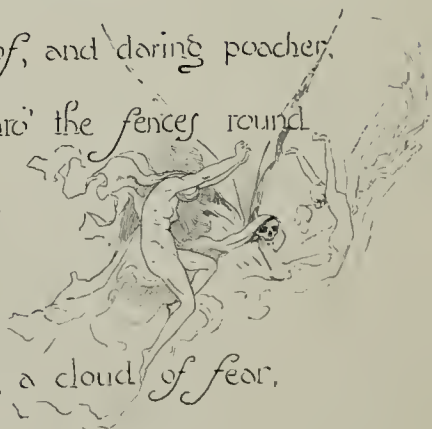
The beds were all untouch'd by hand or tool,
No footsteps marked the damp and mossy gravel
Each walk of green as is the mantled pool,
For want of human travel.

The vine unpruned, and the neglected peach,
Droop'd from the wall with which they used to grapple

And on the knacker'd tree, in easy reach,
Rotted the golden apple,



But awfully the truant shunn'd the ground,
The vagrant kept aloof, and daring poacher,
In spite of gaps that thro' the fences round
Invited the encroacher.



For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is **H**unted!



The flower grew wild
and rankly as the weed.



The pear and quince lay squander'd on the grass;

The mould was purple with unheeded shower

Of bloomy plums — a Wilderness it was

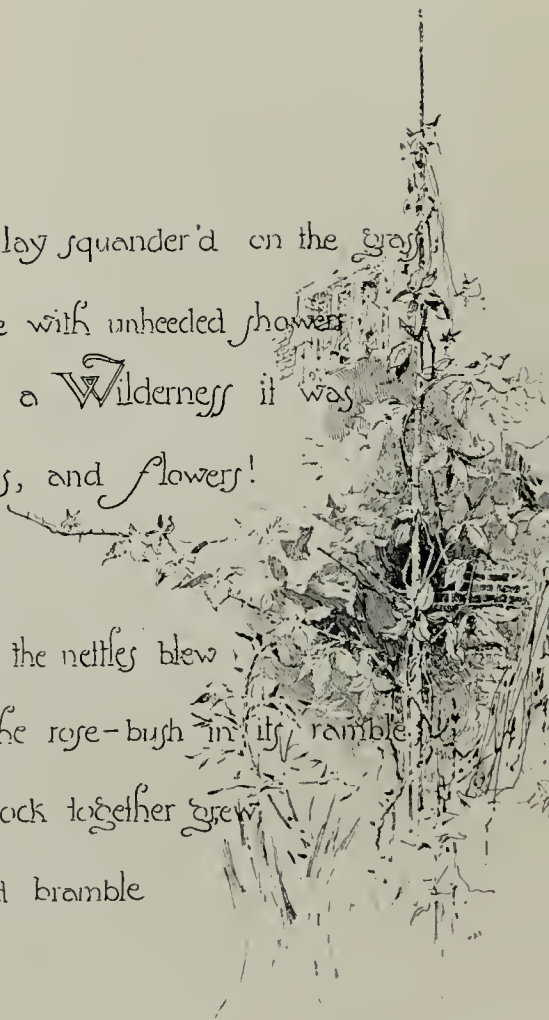
Of fruits, and weeds, and flowers!

The marigold amidst the nettles blew

The gourd embraced the rose-bush in its ramble

The thistle and the stock together grew

The holly-hock and bramble





The bear-bine with the lilac interlaced,
The sturdy burdock choked its slender neighbour,
The spicy pink. All tokens were effaced
Of human care and labour.

The very yew Formality had trained
To such a rigid pyramidal stature,
For want of trimming had almost regained
The ruggedness of nature.





The fountain was
a-dry

The Fountain was a-dry — neglect and time
Had marr'd the work of artisan and mason,
And efts and croaking frogs, begot of slime,
Sprawl'd in the ruin'd basin

The Statue, fallen from its marble base,
Amidst the refuse leaves, and herbage rotten

Like the Idol of some bygone race

Its name and rites forgotten



On ev'ry side the aspect was the same,

All ruin'd, desolate, forlorn and savage:
No hand or foot within the precinct came
To rectify or ravage.



The weedy moat

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,

A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,

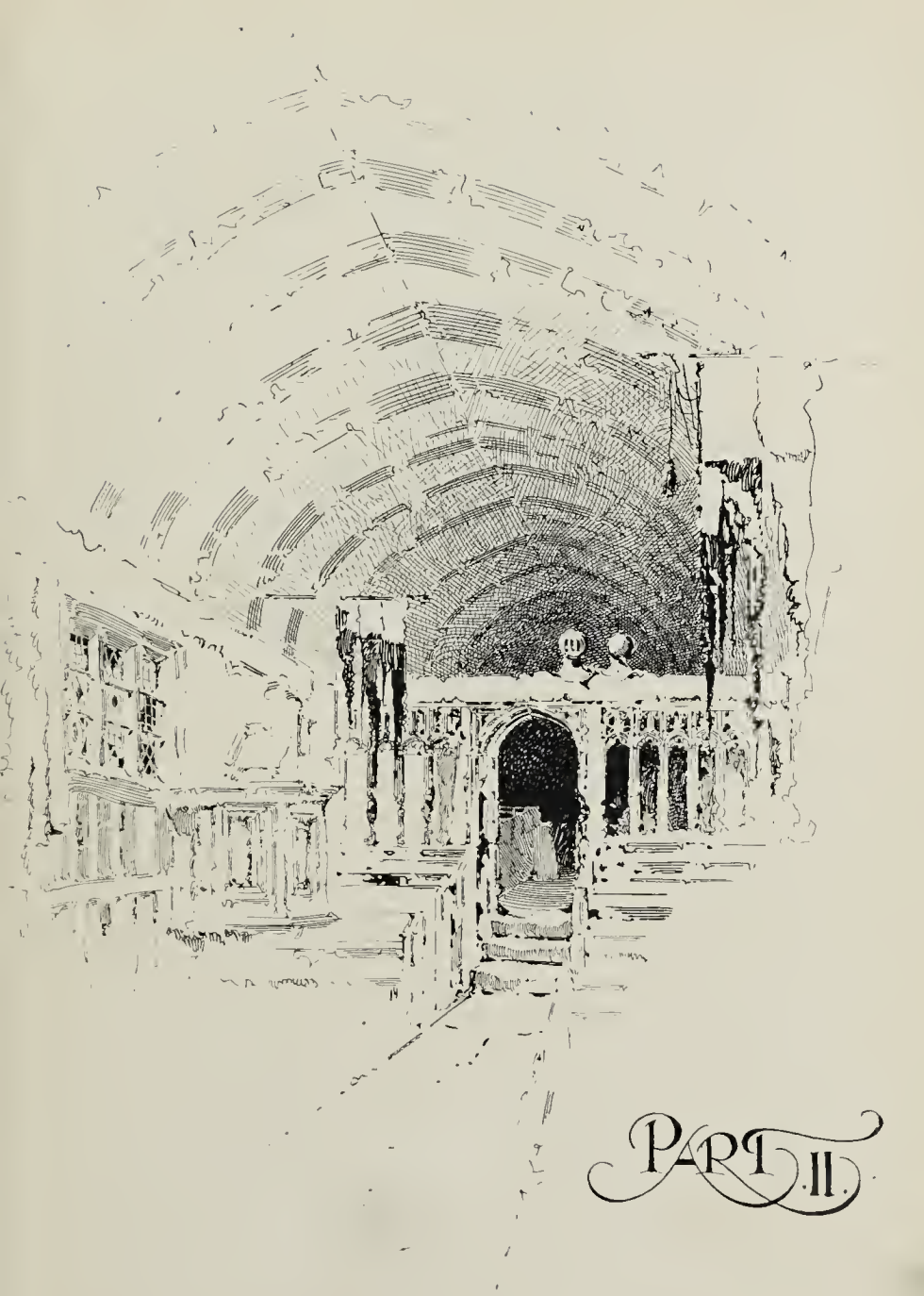
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,

The place is **H**aunted.





The statue, fallen from
its marble base



PART II.



PART II.

O very gloomy is the House of Woe,
Where tears are falling while the bell is knelling,
With all the dark solemnities which show
That Death is in the dwelling.

O very, very dreary is the room

Where Love, domestic Love, no longer nestles,

But, smitten by the common stroke of doom,

The Corpse lies on the trestles!

But House of Wee, and hearse, and sable pall,
The narrow home of the departed mortal,
Ne'er look'd so gloomy as that Ghostly Hall,
With its deserted portal



The centipede along the threshold crept,
The cobweb hung across in mazy tangle,
And in its winding sheet the maggot slept.
All every nook and angle

The keyhole lodged the earwig and her brood,
The emmets of the steps had sole possession,
And marched in search of their diurnal food
In undisturbed procession

As undisturb'd as the prehensile cell,
Of moth or maggot, or the spider's tissue,
For never foot upon that threshold fell,
To enter or to issue.


O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!



"For never foot upon that
threshold fell."

Nowbeit, the doer I push'd — or so I dream'd +
Which slowly, slowly gaped, — the hinges creaking
With such a rusty eloquence, it seemed
That Time himself was speaking



But Time was dumb within  that Mansion old
Or left his tale to the heraldic banners,
That hung from the corroded walls, and told
Of former men and manners.

Those tatter'd flags, that with the open'd door,
Seem'd the old wave of battle to remember,
While fallen fragments danced upon the floor,
Like dead leaves in December

The startled bat flew out, — bird after bird,
The screech-owl overhead began to flutter,
And seemed to mock the cry that she had heard
Some dying victim utter!

A shriek that echo'd from the joisted roof,
And up the stair, and further still and further
Till in some ringing chamber far aloof
It ceased its tale of murder!

Meanwhile the rusty armour rattled round

The banner shudder'd, and the ragged streamer,
All things the horrid tenor of the sound

Acknowledged with a tremor.



The antlers , where the helmet hung , and belt ,
Stir'd as the tempest stirs the forest branches,
Or as the stag had trembled as he felt
The bloodhound at his haunches.

The window jingled in its crumbled frame,
And thro' its many gaps of destitution.

Delicious moans and hollow sighing came

Like those of dissolution.





- No human figure stir'd,
to go or come.
- No face look'd forth
from shut or open casement.

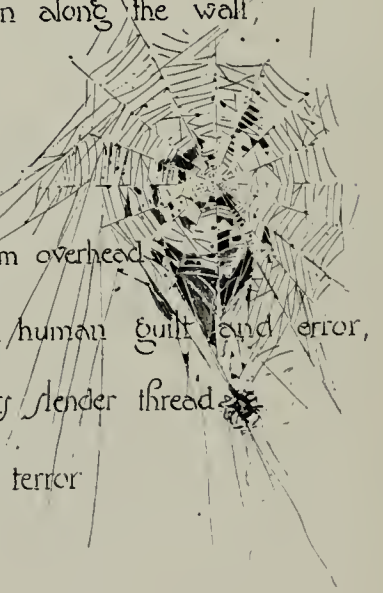
The wood-louse dropped, and rolled into a ball.

Touch'd by some impulse occult or mechanic;
And nameless beetles ran along the wall,
In universal panic

The subtle spider, that from overhead

Hung like a spy on human guilt and error,
Suddenly turn'd and up its slender thread

Ran with a nimble terror



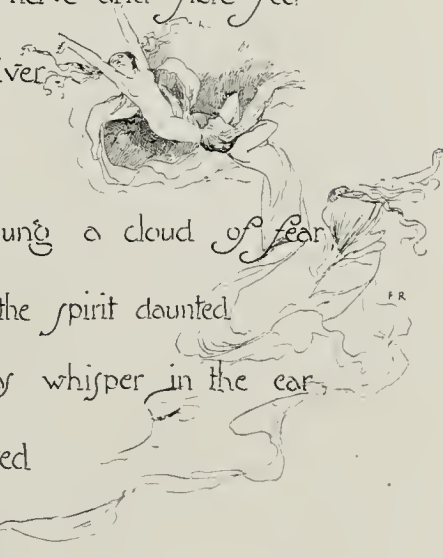
The very stains and fractures on the wall
Assuming features solemn and terrific,
Hinted some Tragedy of that old Hall,
Lock'd up in hieroglyphic

Some tale that might, perchance, have solved the doubt,
Wherefore amongst those flags so dull and livid,
The banner of the **BLOODY HAND** shone out
So ominously vivid.



Some key to that inscrutable appeal,
Which made the very frame of Nature quiver;
And every thrilling nerve and fibre feel
So ague-like a shiver.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, in plain or whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted.



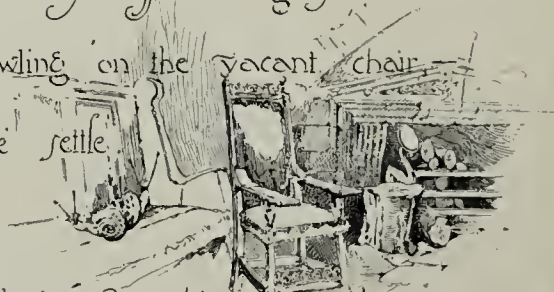
If but a rat had linger'd in the house,
To lure the thought into a social channel !
But not a rat remain'd or tiny mouse
To squeak behind the panel



Large drops roll'd down the walls as if they wept;
And where the cricket used to chirp so shrilly,
The toad was squatting, and the lizard crept
On that damp hearth and chilly

For years no cheerful blaze had sparkled there,
Or glanced on coat of buff or knightly metal;

The slug was crawling on the vacant chair,
The snail upon the settle.



The floor was redolent of mould and must,

The fungus in the rotten seams had quicken'd;

While on the oaken table coats of dust

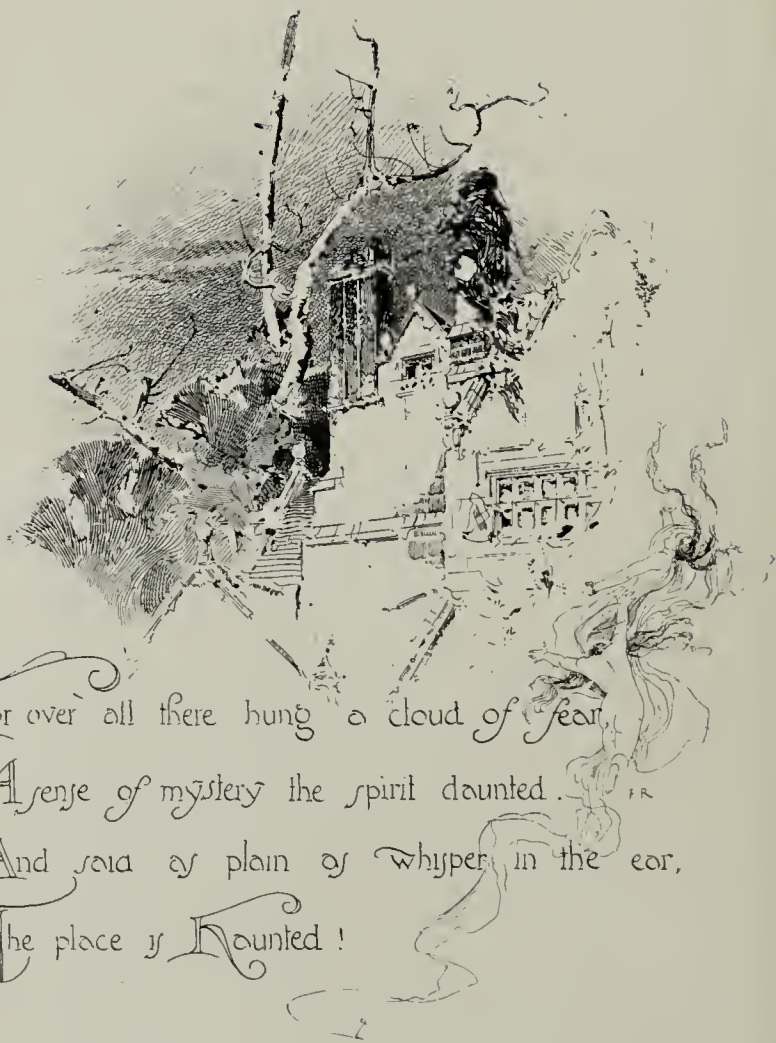
Perennially had thicken'd.



For years no cheer or blythe
had spoken there

No mark of leathern jack or metal can,
No cup — no horn — no hospitable token, —
All social ties between that beard and Man
Had long ago been broken.

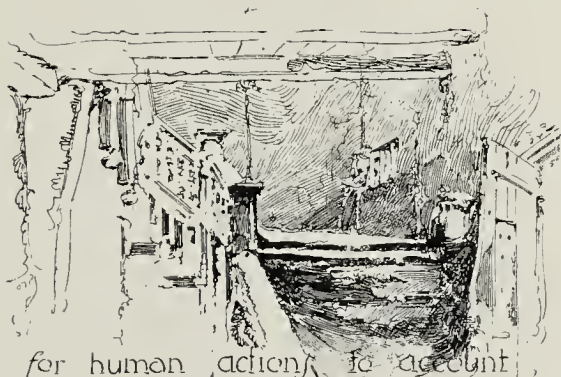
There was so foul a rumour in the air,
The shadow of a presence so atrocious :
No human creature could have feasted there,
Even the most ferocious



For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted.
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted!



PART. III.



‘Tis hard for human actions to account,
Whether from reason or from impulse only,—
But some internal prompting bade me mount
The gloomy stairs and lonely.

Those gloomy stairs, so dark, so damp, so cold
With odours as from bones and relics carnal,
Deprived of right and consecrated mould,
The chapel vault and charnel



These gloomy stairs, so dark,
so damp, so cold,



Those dreary stairs, where with the ~~gaming~~ ^{gaming} street
Of every step so many echoes blended,
The mind, with dark misgivings, feared to guess
How many feet ascended.

The tempest with its spoils had drifted in,

Till each unwholesome stone was darkly spotted

As thickly as the leopard's dappled skin,

With leaves that rankly rotted

The air was thick — and in the upper gloom

The bat — or something in its shape — was winging;
And on the wall, as chilly as a tomb

The Death's - Head moth was clinging

That mystic moth, which, with a sense profound
Of all unholy presence, augurs truly
And with a grim significance slits round
The taper burning bluely



Such omens in the place there seem'd to be,
At ev'ry crooked turn, or on the landing,
The straining eyeball was prepared to see
Some Apparition standing.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted.



Yet no portentous Shape the sight amazed
Each object plain, and tangible, and vapid
But from their tarnish'd frames, dark shadows gazed
And Faces spectre - pallid



Not merely with the mimic life that lies
Within the compass of Art's simulation;
Their souls were looking thro' their painted eyes
With awful speculation.

On ev'ry lip a speechless horror dwelt ;

On ev'ry brow the burthen of affliction

The old Ancestral Spirit knew

The Rowe's malediction



Such earnest woe their features overcast,
They might have stir'd, or sigh'd, or wept, or spoken;
But, save the hollow meaning of the blast,
The stillness was unbroken



Deserted rooms of Exeter
and place.

No other sound or stir of life was there
Except my steps in solitary clamber,
From flight to flight, from humid stair to stair,
From chamber into chamber

Deserted rooms of luxury and state,
That old magnificence had richly furnish'd
With pictures cabinets of ancient date,
And carvings gilt and burnish'd

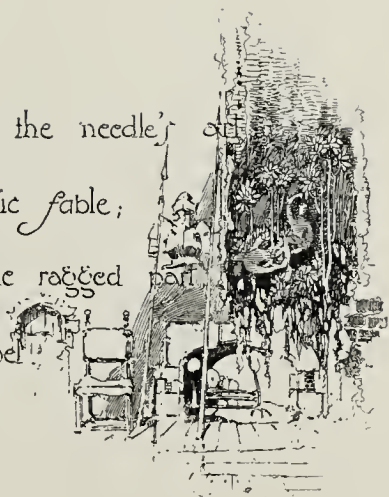


Rich hangings, storied by the needle, and

With Scripture history, or classic fable;

But all had faded, save one ragged part

Where Cain was slaying Abel



The silent waste of mildew and the moth
Had marr'd the tissue with a partial ravage;
But undecaying strewn'd upon the cloth
Each feature stern and savage

The sky was pale; the cloud a thing of doubt;
Some hues were fresh, and some decay'd and duller
But still the Bloody Hand shone strongly out
With vehemence of colour!

The Bloody Hand that with a lurid stain
Shone on the dusty floor, a dismal token
Projected from the casement, a painted pane,
Where all beside was broken.



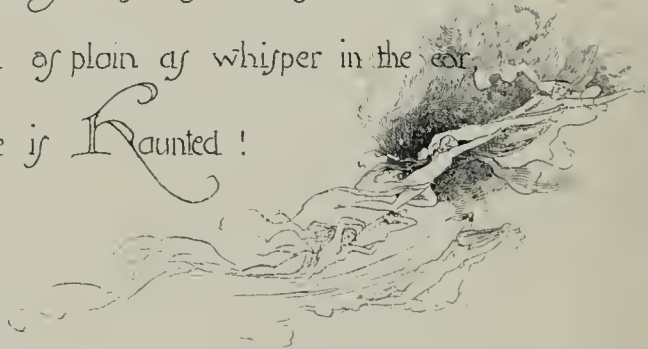
The Bloody Hand significant of crime ,
That glaring on the old heraldic banner ,
Had kept its crimson unimpaired by time ,
In such a wondrous manner .

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear .

A sense of mystery the spirit daunted ,

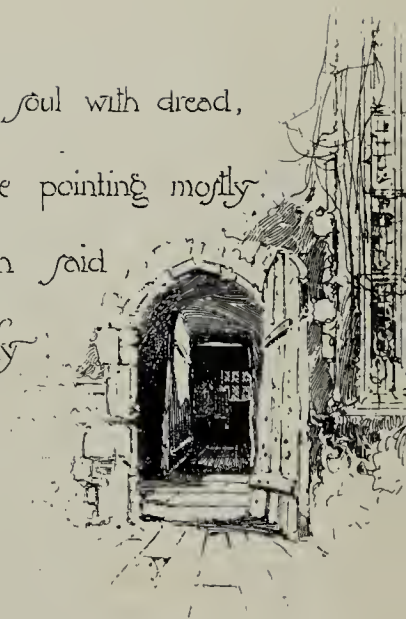
And said as plain as whisper in the ear ,

The place is Haunted !



The Death Watch tick'd behind the panell'd oak,
Inexplicable tremors shook the array,
And echoes strange and mystical awoke,
The fancy to embarrass.

Prophetic hints that fill'd the soul with dread,
But thro' one gloomy entrance pointing mostly
The while some secret inspiration said,
That Chamber is The Ghostly.





But thro' one
Gloomy entrance

Across the door no gossamer festoon
Swung pendulous — no web — no dusty fringes
No silky chrysalis or white cocoon
About its nooks and hinges.



The spider shunn'd the interdicted room,

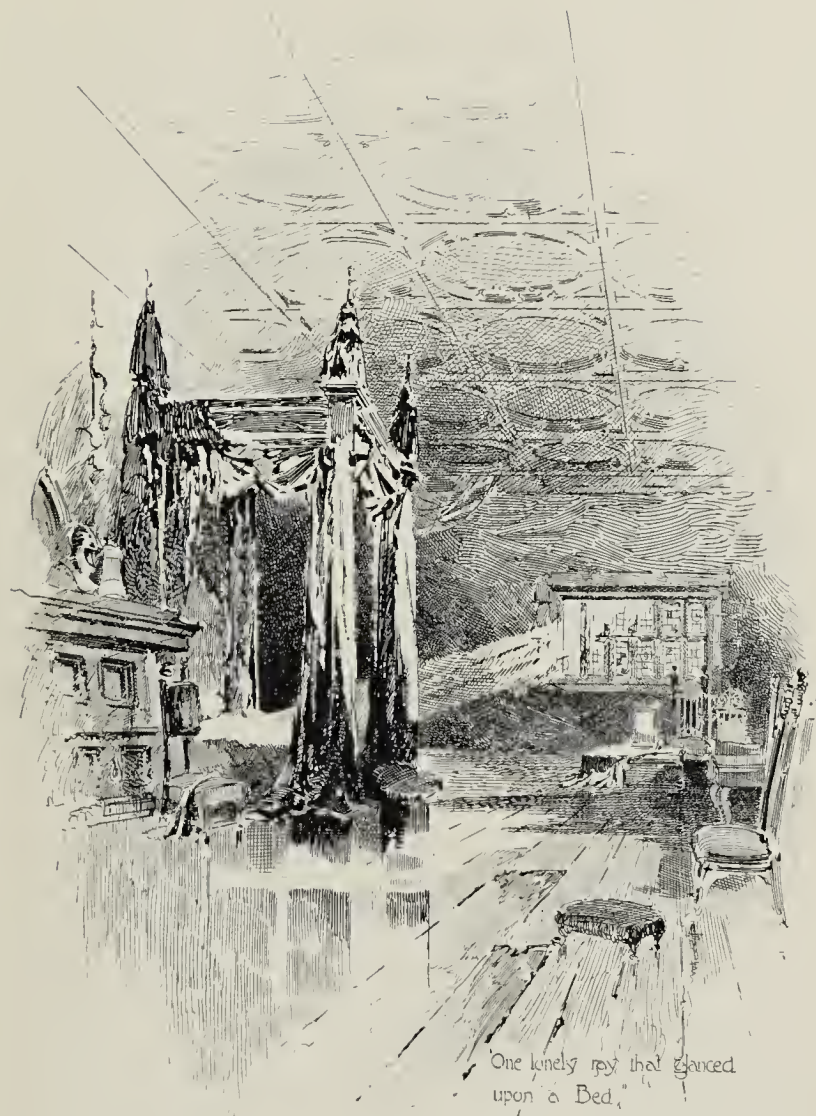
The moth, the beetle, and the fly were banish'd,

And where the sunbeam fell athwart the gloom

The very midge had vanish'd

One lonely ray that glanced upon a Bed,
As if with awful aim direct and certain
To show the *Bloody Hand* in burning red
Embroidered on the curtain.





"One lonely ray that glanced
upon a Bed."

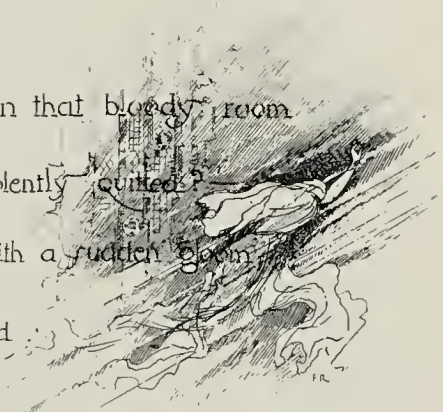
And yet no gory stain was on the quilt—
The pillow in its place had slowly rotted;
The floor alone retain'd the trace of guilt,
Those boards obscurely spotted.

Obscurely spotted to the door, and thence
With mazy doubles to the grated casement
Oh what a tale they told of fear intense
Of horror and amazement!



What human creature in the dead of night
Had coursed like hunted hare that cruel distance?
Had sought the door, the window in his flight,
Striving for dear existence?

What shrieking Spirit in that bloody room
Its mortal frame had violently quitted?
Across the sunbeam, with a sudden gloom,
A ghostly shadow flitted.

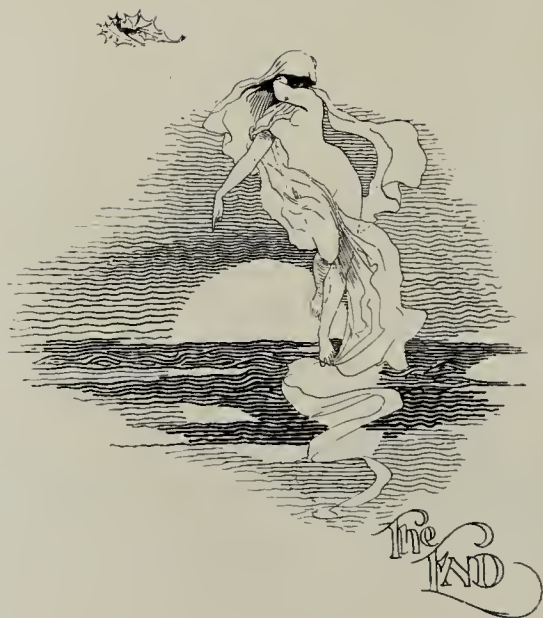


Across the sunbeam, and along the wall,
But painted on the air so very dimly,
It hardly veil'd the tapestry at all,
Or portrait frowning grimly

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,

And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!





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